

critical digest

Vol. II No. 43

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The Weekly That Keeps You Informed of the Current Broadway Critical Scene

N.Y. Openings This Week

The Live Wire-Playhouse, 8/17/50. Michael Todd production of Carson Kanin's new comedy featuring Scott McKay, Sheila Bond and Jack Gilford. Donald Oenslager designed the sets; Kanin directed.

Daily Critics Rate Second Festival Play

The Lady from the Sea-Fulton, 8/7/50. Second two week stand fared better than first, but critics still wished producers Ames-Hayden-Wanamaker picked stronger scripts. Ibsen revival was recommended for drama students and Ibsen fans. Luise Rainer received fine personal notices for a good acting job in the lead, though Atkinson, Times, noted that her heavy accent hindered. Direction by Wanamaker was also highly praised, critics thought he did good job in bringing life to dull script. Hobe, Variety, was only critic to pan show. He thought it was disappointing, sluggish and inaudible theatre. Garland, Journal American, marked it down as a "should see" play. Sheaffer, Eagle, thought play deserves a longer run. Coleman, Mirror, is convinced Shaw read the Ibsen play before writing Candida. He also thinks it is time for some one to make new English adaptations of Ibsen. Steven Hill and Anne Jackson were complimented for bringing some ingratiating slapstick to the script.

Summer Theatre Tryouts

Davis Snow's The Long Days debut at Westport, Connecticut, Country Playhouse is the work of an author with a good, quick flair for the theatre, commented Doul, Variety. But play starring Florence Reed concerning New England region is reminiscent of O'Neil and Wharton. Subject matter worried summer play goers, but did not arouse them...Ogunquit, Maine, Playhouse's attempt at a musical, Just Around the Corner, didn't come off, reports Riley, Billboard. Music by Joe Sherman, lyrics by Langston Hughes plus aid of seasoned Broadway players like Francis Compton, Bob Kennedy, Beverly Janis and Dottie Sauter fail to give the show spirit.

Shows That Closed

Detective Story-Broadhurst, 3/23/49-8/12/50. Sidney Kingsley play starring Ralph Bellamy won 21 "pro" votes of the 30 critics rated. Play was praised as being thorough and sincere. But Atkinson wishes it had also been inspired. The rest of the critics billed play as first class melodrama. Gibbs, New Yorker, commented that it was a poor attempt at duplicating Front Page.

Prediction for Season

Barring unforeseen difficulties, Coleman, Mirror, thinks the coming season will be better than the past one. All of the top writers are back, plus many of the top directors, he told WNBC Critic's Corner. Plays today might be fewer, but they run longer. They are more intelligent, better produced and better acted, the critic stated. While today's acting is of a higher caliber, there aren't as many stars.

Land Lease Theatre

George Jean Nathan complains that American producers and audiences are overawed by second rate English actors...Billy Rose sticks up for the abundance of American musicals in London by boosting that the British have no one to equal Rodgers and Hammerstein...Actor Robert Morley, back home in London, condemns American audiences for following the opinions of "winchell and a few others". Though he admitted American musicals are 75 years ahead of British shows. He thought the producer and director's name on American playbills should be in smaller type.

 ' A Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance '

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

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| 1. NY Times | 11. Newark News | 21. Catholic World |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune | 12. Women's Wear Daily | 22. Commonweal |
| 3. NY News | 13. Daily Worker | 23. Cue |
| 4. NY Mirror | 14. Wall Street Journal | 24. Chr.Sci. Monitor |
| 5. NY Compass (PM, Star) | 15. Journal of Commerce | 25. St. Review Lit. |
| 6. NY Post | 16. George Jean Nathan | 26. Newsweek |
| 7. NY Sun (Morehouse) | 17. Morning Telegraph | 27. Time |
| 8. NY Journal American | 18. Variety | 28. Nation |
| 9. NY World-Telegram and Sun | 19. Billboard | 29. New Republic |
| 10. Brooklyn Eagle | 20. Theatre Arts | 30. New Yorker |

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 2-9-13-14-22-25-29.
So-So: 16-30.

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Pro: 27 votes. Con: 23. So-So: 6-29.

Death of a Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27.

Detective Story-Hudson, 3/23/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 13. None: 5-10-11-16-24-25-28-29.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfeld, 12/8/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 6-21-28.
So-So: 16-19-22-23-27.. None: 25.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 5-6-7-20-26-28-30. None: 13

Kiss Me, Kate-Shubert, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. None: 28.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 26 votes. Con: 16. So-So: 2-22-30

Mister Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17.

Peep Show-Winter Garden, 6/28/50. Pro: 4-5-6-8-10-11-15-17-19-23. Con: 1-2-12-26-27-28-29-30. So-So: 3-14-18. None: 7-9-13-16-20-21-22-24-25.

Peter Pan-Imperial, 4/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 8-13-16-30. So-So: 6-14-19.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 27. So-So: 23.
None: 5-10-11-13-14-16-22-28-29.

Texas Li'l Darlin'-Hellinger, 11/25/49. Pro: 12 votes. Con: 1-4-7-8-18-19-23-29-30. So-So: 2-5-10-11-20-26-27. None: 25-28.

Where's Charley?-St.James, 10/11/48. Pro: 16 votes. Con: 6-7-12-13-16-19-22-24-25-26. So-So: 4-27. None: 10-28.

The Wisteria Trees-Martin Beck, 3/29/50. Pro: 15 votes. Con: 2-7-9-10-13-16-22-23-25-26-27-28. So-So: 18-29.

Tickets Please-Coronet, 4/27/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 11-16-29-30. So-So: 26.

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' Green Room Department '
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MR. ROBERTS vs MR. BAXTER...Beverly Baxter, critic of London Evening Standard, blast-London production of Mr. Roberts starring Tyrone Power as being "revolting, not art." Durling, Journal American, is ready to debate. Anything that reflects life as truly as this show is art. Several of the British critics agreed with Baxter that play was dull. Letters to Editor section of Baxter paper blamed Broadway for lowering the morals and traditions of Western culture.

TABLE PENSIONS...Actors Equity, which is nearing agreement with League of N.Y.Theatres for new contract, was urged to table the pension issue by Theatre News Weekly. Paper charged negotiators with not being mature or skillful enough to avoid name calling. Saving the theatre is more important than saving face.

BROADWAY PAY...Seven and a half million dollars was paid to actors on Broadway during the 1949-50 season, Morrison, Variety, reports in a survey. Actors received almost as much as other groups did combined. Stagehands, authors, musicians, managers and press agents followed.

TURNABOUT...Press Agent Mike O'Shea, subbing for Denton Walker on WPIX Broadway Scrapbook, received an unfavorable review from Variety's TV critic. But he held out some hope as O'Shea becomes more familiar with the medium...Jackie Gleason's letter panning Jack O'Brien's appearance on CBS TV Stork Club was printed in full in the latter's column.

PLAY SPONSOR...Joel Turner's Best of Spirits is the play Rice, Post, will sponsor at Putnam County, N.Y., Playhouse. He picked this script from the hundreds he has read during the past year because it has something to say and because it will give a worthy unproduced author a chance to see his play on the stage.

MILLER'S IDEA...Role of playwright is that of a super reporter, Arthur Miller detailed in Times. Author of Death of a Salesman sees his job as reporting and analyzing an incident fully. The report should include not only the details, but an analysis of the antagonists relations to the world around them, to each other, plus the causes and effects of their actions.

RUMOR...Ticket brokers who put up the money for a Broadway show are giving the producer a deadline on which he must repay the full sum, whispers Kilgallen, Journal American. If he defaults they'll take over the show and run it themselves. Variety recently reported that Mike Todd borrowed money from the ticket brokers to finance Peep Show.

THEATRE ON SKATES...Newest London innovation in drama is presenting musical comedies on ice. Rose Marie is now playing at Harringay's Arena. Plot has been changed to allow for swifter lovemaking, female lead's songs are sung by girl hidden off stage. "Stage" suggests that in the future skaters will have to be singers, actresses as well as dancers. They welcomed the new addition to the theatre medium.

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' Random Items '
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Dumont TV has leased Ambassador Theatre, NBC has leased Center Theatre...Gibbs, New Yorker, is casting his play Season in the Sun at his Fire Island home...Deutsch, Theatre Arts editor, was a recent guest on WPIX Broadway Scrapbook quiz...Glurman, New Republic, will direct Donald Ogden Stewart's The Kidders...Jack Barry's NBC radio program "Stars and Starters" will be presented as a Broadway play...Pimm's Cup Celebrity Tennis Tournament will be held at Forest Hills during the National Championships...Record companies have released several full length plays for radio presentation.

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' Summer Theatres '
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Five New York critics traveled to Washington, D.C. to witness the opening performance of Paul Green's third "symphonic drama", Faith of Our Fathers at Rock Creek Park. They were more impressed with the half million dollar permanent outdoor theatre than they were with either the players or the play. General complaint was that writing was sketchy and dull, while players did their jobs poorly. Choir and dancers came in for most praise. Atkinson, Times, was the only critic to think show had merit as entertainment.

Rice, Post, traveled from Washington to Williamsburg, Virginia to attend Green's The Common Glory. Drama editor considered this play first rate and inspired as compared with the dull Washington pageant...Chapman, News, branching even further afield, was impressed by the Boy Scout festival of Indian dances presented at Red Rocks Theatre, near Denver, which seats 10,000 under the stars.

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' Interview Round Up '
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MARIE POWERS...The Medium's original star considers the role the most difficult physically ever written for a singer-actress she admitted on CBS Invitation to Music. She is now on her way to Rome where the author-director of the opera will produce the movie version.

ARTHUR SCHWARTZ...Producer of forthcoming Hilda Crane expressed conviction that theatre will never die to Coleman, Mirror. But he is worried about the present dearth of new playwrights and directors. That is why he is supporting Howard Lindsay's New Playwrights Committee. Hilda Crane will be the producer-writer's first straight play.

WHITNEY BOLTON...Morning Telegraph drama critic and McNaught Syndicate columnist, has just completed a tour of the country. Out-of-towners he told MBS Sardis are more interested in the simple side of New York life, than they are in the glamour side. They want to know how a person of their economic and social means lives in New York.

G. MAILLARD KESSLER...Photographer will present collection of 2500 theatrical portraits to the theatre section of N.Y. Public Library. They will be made in triplicate one set bound, one set for photostats, and one for traveling shows to universities. Kessler told Theatre News Weekly that the theatre is the cradle of the entertainment world.

LLOYD NELSON...Stage director of subway circuit Native Son reads the script six or seven times before he sets the play in his mind, he revealed on MBS Sardis. Then he thinks of the characters in terms of well known Broadway or Hollywood personalities. If they aren't available he tries to cast counterparts.

MAURICE SCHWARTZ...Producer of Second Avenue's Yiddish Art Theatre, which closed its doors after 31 years, is now in Hollywood to make 20th Century Fox "Bird of Paradise" Times and circumstances forced him to close his New York theatre he told Jamison, Times. Young people today aren't speaking Yiddish and production costs became too high. But he is still interested in keeping the Yiddish theatre alive.

NEWS AND NOTES...Garland, Journal American, plays the title role in Clutterbuck at Cragmoor, N.Y. Playhouse...Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun, has been branded as a "scab" by the CIO Newspaper Guild for crossing the picket lines of the strikebound paper...WJLM At Home with Lionel Barrymore is heard daily at 6:30 P.M...Boris Karloff will start as a disc jockey show for children on WNEW...A little theatre on lower Fifth Avenue which seats 90 people rents for \$8.00 per night.

